



MEDIA RELEASE

Awards Banquet to Honor Outstanding Youth Leaders On Friday, May 11

SANTA BARBARA, CA – May 7, 2012

The City of Santa Barbara, in association with the Santa Barbara Teen Coalition, will host the **11th Annual Youth Leadership Awards Banquet** on Friday, May 11th at 6pm at the Carrillo Recreation Center Ballroom, 100 E. Carrillo Street. Thirty-one youth nominated from agencies throughout the Santa Barbara community will be honored at the event. These youth, along with 18 others being recognized for community service, exemplify this year's theme, "Youth Leaders...Santa Barbara's Super Heroes." The 49 students being recognized have shown extraordinary strength and power, and have overcome many challenges, excelling in academics and community service.

Our society today, especially our teens, face many obstacles and often recognition of their positive contributions is missing. Friday's event will showcase the positive attitude, academic achievement and major accomplishments of many of the youth in our community. "I've seen what a little bit of encouragement, recognition and gratitude can do for a teen's well-being," states Isis Castaneda, Academy of Healing Arts Program Director. The students include some who are learning to change their circumstances and are graduating when a year ago it seemed impossible, or another, who suffered the tremendous challenge of the death of a loved one, resulting in having to put aside their teenage years. One of the nominees, Rene "Nino" Mireles, was nominated because of his tireless efforts to improve the environment. As a member of the Coalition of Youth Advocates, Nino has dedicated over 300 hours of community service while maintaining a grade point average of 4.26.

In addition to the Academy of Healing Arts, other youth agencies involved include Bishop Garcia Diego High School, Casa de la Raza, Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, Coalition of Youth Advocates, Domestic Violence Solution, Dos Pueblos High School, El Puente High School, Each One Teach One, Everybody Dance Now!, Friday Night Live, Fund for Santa Barbara's Youth Making Changes, Future Leaders of America, Isla Vista Teen Center, Just Communities, La Cuesta High School, Laguna Blanca School, Quasars for Sea Program, City of Santa Barbara Neighborhood and Outreach Services, San

Marcos High School, Santa Barbara County Education Office, Santa Barbara High School, Santa Barbara West Boys and Girls Club, Santa Barbara Youth Council, Santa Barbara Youth Mariachi, and the YSS Reconnecting Youth Program.

The ceremony will include a motivational keynote address by Davies Kabogoza, an Ugandan native, who too faced many challenges as a teen but is currently a standout forward for Santa Barbara City College's men's soccer team, as well as a small tribute and recognition of Babatunde Folayemi, youth and teen advocate, who died unexpectedly in March. The City of Santa Barbara has been named the Youth Agency of the Year in recognition of its many youth programs and collaboration through the public library and Parks and Recreation Department. Guests will be entertained by dance numbers from *Everybody Dance Now*, as well as a swing dance troupe from *Cleveland Elementary School*, led by dance instructor Trudy Olsen Curtis. The event begins with dinner at 6 p.m. followed by the awards ceremony.

"This event provides an opportunity for youth agencies from all over Santa Barbara County to celebrate what teens are doing and encourage them to continue," explains Ms. Castaneda. Press is encouraged to attend and report on what is really right with our Santa Barbara community.

For more information, please contact Susan Young, Neighborhood and Outreach Services Supervisor, at 897-2652.

Contact: Susan Young, Neighborhood & Outreach Services Coordinator
Phone: 805-897-2652
Email: syoung@santabarbaraca.gov

###